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LONDON OUT OF THE SEASON.

'SWEET are the uses of adversity,' says the poet. 'Ay, bitter-sweet,' say I. Figure to yourself a poor wretch condemned to spend the hottest part of the summer in stuffy London lodgings. It is a piping hot day in the middle of August. Every one who can scrape together a few pounds and slip for a time out of harness is taking flight: moorward, forestward, Parisward, seaward. I, for the poor wretch aforesaid is myself, more than half inclined to kick at fate and to be envious of the good fortune of others, betake myself to a restaurant for my mid-day meal. The perspiring waiters have hardly energy to hand the bill of fare and to brush the crumbs from the cloth. But the flies show no lack of activity. They are ubiquitous—almost as numerous in London as Germans—they drown themselves in your tea, in your tankard of bitter—nay, even in the mustard they insist on taking a pungent bath; and worst of all, they settle with maddening iteration and pertinacity on the bald spot which barber Time has already begun to clear, and is day by day slowly but surely widening upon your crown. It is too hot to eat. Oh for one breath of sea-breeze or pure moorland air! Happy thought, the river! For, all said and done, London in summer is not without its compensations.

We embark on one of the new roomy steam-boats, which make us wonder how generation after generation of Londoners has been able to put up with the horrible little penny steamer of the past; and cheerfully pay our twopence, and head towards Chelsea. The gardens along the Embankment are in all their bravery. What can be pleasanter for the jaded eye to rest upon than the star-like single dahlia, far prettier, to my mind, than its flaunting double sister? The clock tower at Westminster looms large through the golden haze; and even the church in Smith Square—which Dickens likens to a prostrate elephant with its four legs in the air, and which is memorable as having looked down upon the

walks of Lizzie Hexam and Jenny Wren and old Riah—puts on an almost poetical appearance. On past Lambeth, which carefully hides its gardens from the view lest one should be surfeited with beauty, or become discontented with dusty glowing pavements; and past Millbank, whose inmates may at least be cool, if inmates there be who still survive the condemnation of this most ugly prison; and presently we arrive at Battersea. One may spend an hour more disagreeably than in wandering on the turf of the Park, or in winding about the paths of its admirably arranged and well-kept subtropical gardens. At Chelsea we disembark, and lounge for a few moments on the suspension bridge, languidly regarding a fussy little tug which is laboriously towing up stream against a strong tide a string of lumbering barges. Then we seek the shade of the gardens in Cheyne Walk, beneath the stern face of Carlyle, who looks down from his library-chair upon his pedestal in the midst of the shrubs. As the afternoon creeps on, a slight breeze springs up, and gives us heart to go on as far as the dark red brick tower of Chelsea Church, with its shrubs and flowers. At the end of the churchyard we are fronted by the somewhat commonplace-looking tomb of Sir Hans Sloane; and immediately opposite the gate—which is uncompromisingly shut and locked—a simple headstone to the memory of the printer Woodfall reminds us of the *Letters of Junius*, the question of whose authorship has proved a greater puzzle to the curious than a 'World' double acoustic. Then we pass along Church Row, and halt opposite the medallion which marks Carlyle's house, and, looking at the well-worn steps leading to his door, we try to picture to ourselves the many men, great in literature, art, or politics, whose feet have trodden them; and are almost prepared to see the door open, and the slouched hat, and cloak, and thought-worn face of the Master himself issue forth.

But the lengthening shadows warn us that it is time to be returning to the prison-house, and so we again embark, getting out at Westminster, and

following the Embankment, at present hideous with the buzz of the steam-roller and scrunching of granite; though we cannot but admire the type of relentless force and purpose afforded by the newly-invented scarifier, which ploughs steadily through the unbroken roadway, sometimes, at a specially hard bit, bringing up with a jerk and quiver the plucky little engine, whose ensign of the prancing horse—for it hails from Rochester—brings to our thoughts the hop-gardens of Kent, now in their full glory. The Strand is simply chaos, with its heaps of wooden blocks, and the trenches, hills, and hollows, for it is under repair; and the various companies—Gas, Water, Electric-lighting—are holding high revel, and exasperating almost to madness the Strand tradesman, who sees week after week the traffic diverted, his goods spoilt by dust, and occasionally mud, and his profits steadily diminishing, while he has before him the pleasant prospect of insult added to injury in the shape of heavily-increased rates.

Later in the evening we come again to smoke a meditative pipe on the Embankment, and to enjoy what is one of the prettiest sights imaginable—sunset on the Thames. Looking eastward, through the spans of the noble Waterloo Bridge, we watch the steamboats appearing and disappearing through the haze; while high up, past the Temple and Cleopatra's Needle, and the colossal height of the new Savoy Hotel, we see the dome of the Cathedral almost floating in a sea of golden mist. At Charing Cross, the electric light is already throwing its white glare upon the busy platform; and after buying an evening paper, we stop to read a notice of a hop-pickers' train which starts at midnight, and carries the pickers for the small sum of two shillings and sixpence to the very heart of the hop-country. And so back to our solitary lodging—to the evening cup of tea, lingering a moment to get a box of vestas from the melancholy-voiced decayed gentleman in Villiers Street, and to exchange a word or two with the cheerful and contented-looking blind net-maker by St Martin's Church, and his clever but uncertain-tempered little Scotch terrier. In Seven Dials—almost regenerated, and no longer able to come up to its rival, the Five Points of New York, in the matter of unlawful attractions—we stop to look at the parrots and rabbits and dogs, and green lizards and snakes, and other live-stock whose presence makes itself felt by more senses than one.

Thence we move eastward, and make our way through Long Acre into Drury Lane, whose courts have poured forth their myriads into the street to get a breath of air. And a varied phase of human life it is, perplexing to the philanthropist, and deeply interesting to the student of life and manners. There has been a doubtless well-meant but questionably wise agitation lately against the employment of children in theatres; but any one studying the Drury Lane children, and remarking the smartness and neatness of those who are employed at the theatres, and seeing the graceful movements and hearty glee of the youngsters as they waltz or dance a hornpipe to the music of a barrel-organ, might well hesitate before aiding to cut off this source of joy to the little denizens of the grimy neighbourhood, and the welcome aid which winter-employment brings to many a poor

struggling family. But it is now late evening, and the cabs begin to roll up to the door of the Mogul Music-hall, bringing some star of comic song to play his or her part here, and rattle away swiftly to perhaps three or four more stages before the night's work is done.

And now in the solitude of my room memory begins to wake! What a mysterious thing memory is. A sight, a sound, an odour, and the march of time is arrested, the shadow goes back on the dial of Ahaz, and one's old life lives again. For my own part, the rustling of leaves, the tinkling of a sheep-bell, and the odour of a lime-kiln carry me back to the day that is gone, when I used to wander for hours upon a heath, now passed away, a victim to the rage for enclosure, and more than once was lost amid the gorse which overtopped my head like a veritable forest. And now, this same memory, stirred by the thoughts of Kent and the hop-picking, goes straying away far from the disagreeable present, and half lulled by the roar of Oxford Street traffic mellowed by distance, falls into a dreamy languor. Again I see the hop-gardens with their rich festoons and golden cones, and mark a youthful figure which shivers in the keen morning air as the horns resound through the frosty dawn to call the pickers to their work. The air is redolent of burning wood, whose blue smoke curls up from where the picker boils his kettle: again I hear the flip-flap of the village goodwife's pattens as she passes along the smooth trodden clay down the alley between the standing hops to the clearing where the busy hopdog has already wrenched up the poles, and arranged them handy to the bin where the family all set to work, even the child of three making-believe to play at work as she fills her basket, and gleefully adds its contents to the bin, to increase the number of tallies to be handed over by the measurer at mid-day, and to earn the promised lollipops.

And then at the dinner-hour again to go nutting in the thick hazel hedge which borders the field, or perhaps look in at the east and admire the purple flame of the long brimstone-fed fire-places, which radiate from the centre like the spokes of a wheel; or, if the dryer be in a good humour after his dinner-cider, mount to the drying-floor, and watch him carefully rake the fragrant hop-flowers which cover the haircloth spread over the open lat floor, till the pungent odour of the brimstone makes us both glad to seek the open air; or, on another floor, listen to the scrape of the wooden shovel over the brown-stained, seed-covered boards, as the hops are shovelled into the gaping mouth of the 'pocket,' into which from time to time the disc of the press descends, for machinery has already ousted the human stamper, and only in old-fashioned farms does one see him half-buried in the fragrant showers, treading stolidly on till the long pocket with its quaint ears, for the purpose of hauling, becomes hard as iron, and is lowered from its distending ring to be sewn up with strong twine, stencilled with the prancing horse and its owner's name, and stowed on end against the wall in readiness for the market. Ah me! long years ago. No hop-pickers' trains then; no pickers' tents hired from London by the farmers. A shed, a barn, and here and there among the more advanced reformers a row of huts which stood

open for the rest of the year, was all the shelter that the favoured few could obtain; I mean, of the outsiders who came down for the picking, for whom little love was felt by the regular hands—the families of those who worked on the farm, and, in out-of-the-way places, often those of a somewhat higher standing in life, who looked, and with reason, upon ‘hopping’ as a healthful outing, much in the same way that a wearied town worker now regards a fortnight or a month spent abroad or at the sea-side. Most of the outsiders tramped down, and the hedge-rows at night twinkled with lines of fires where the pickers cooked their potatoes, with perhaps a rasher of bacon, whose odour rose temptingly on the crisp evening air. And then the constant flow of ‘chaff’ which ran down the line as the evening pipe was lighted, preparatory to retiring to the straw-strewn barn, or the snug nook beneath the hedge, where the wearied picker slept till the cold of dawn woke him to boil his kettle, before the horn should summon him at six o’clock to a new day’s pleasant toil.

And the ‘Irishers,’ whose outlandish ways and convivial battles on Saturday nights or on pay-day considerably exercised the minds of the peaceful villagers. Well do I remember the two pretty sisters, Nora and Mary, who came to our house for a pinch of salt or pepper, or a kettle of hot water. Their history I was hardly old enough to know much of, but old enough to feel sorry when a year came which brought back Mary, looking ill and sad, but no Nora—she, poor girl, slept beneath the turf far away in the old village in South Ireland. And then the terrible cholera-year, when street after street in the market-town hung out its black flag to warn people not to pass that way, when the hop-pickers died off like flies in frost, and the Roman and Anglican clergyman side by side stepped over the dead and dying, as they lay closely packed upon the straw, to give such consolation as was in their power. The churchyards then opened their gates to unaccustomed hosts of guests, for in these villages, except in rare cases of epidemic, funerals were few and far between; and great was the awe, not unmingled with curiosity, of the simple villagers as they regarded the funeral customs of the wilder western Irish—their *keening*, and the performance of the *deasil*, if that be the true name for their carrying the dead round the churchyard with the sun, or against it, I forget which.

And old Bob Hayes, most renowned of hop-dryers—for drying is a skilled process—even though he was half paralysed, and could only hobble on two sticks, for drink, that slayer of men, had already begun to lay him low—I wonder if he still hobbles on, or basks in some warm corner, or if he has already departed to a land where he needs no stick to prop his steps. Wherever he be, may the narcotic properties of his beloved hops medicine him to sweet sleep.

And the meadow in which were the springs whose rise or fall the farmers came to consult in the early year, in order to judge of the coming summer, whose banks were clothed with cowslips in May, and whose old nut-bushes were well laden in September. Ah! for that autumn afternoon when, tempted by those same nuts, we six deliberately refused to hear the voice of the

school-going bell, and spent a right happy time, to be followed on the morrow by direful results both at home and at school. How gladly would one pay over again the price for such another afternoon in childhood’s golden days! Alas! the shadow creeps on and on, and the day is far advanced. Of the five I made inquiries: such a one dead; another in a lunatic asylum; another in America; others gone and left no trace; and I, even I, alone remain.

Then the fishponds, along whose banks the White Lady sang as the evening mists arose, and where— But at this rate I shall never have done. And my mind comes back with a wrench to the sad reality that the flies are still buzzing, and that through my window I can hear the rattle of the dock-strikers’ collecting-boxes.

But one of these days I shall go again to see the old place, for, although it is much changed, it is still out of the ordinary track, is miles from a railway, has no School Board, and the most moving incident of its day is the passage of the carrier’s van.

MY SHIPMATE LOUISE.

THE ROMANCE OF A WRECK.

CHAPTER XXXII.—THE FORM OF AGREEMENT.

THE captain did not arrive, and we had the table to ourselves. Miss Temple was subdued, and her glances almost wistful. It gave me but little pleasure to humble her, or in any way to triumph over her; but I had made up my mind to be master whilst we were together, and not to spare her feelings in my effort to assert myself; and I may add here that I had determined, if it pleased God to preserve us, to make this noble and beautiful woman my wife. For I was now loving her, but so secretly, that my love was scarce like a passion even to my own reason; and the conclusion I had formed was that the only road to her heart lay behind the armour of her pride, which must be broken down and demolished if ever I was to gain her affection. And sure I was of this too: that she was of that kind of women who need to be bowed by a strong hand into a submissive posture before they can be won.

We spoke very little; the captain’s cabin was not far off, and the knowledge of his being in it held us very taciturn. However, we made amends for our silence after we had supped and regained the deck. She was now to be easily convinced that our best chance of escaping from this barque was for me to fool the captain to the top of his bent, that he might carry us to Rio; and before long she was even talking cheerfully of our prospects, asking me in a half-laughing way how we were to manage for money when we arrived at Rio, whether I had any friends there, and so on.

‘There are my jewels,’ she said; ‘but I should be very sorry to part with them.’

‘There will be no need to do that,’ said I. ‘I have a few bank-notes in my pocket which I think may suffice. There is an English consul, I suppose, at Rio, and he will advise us.’

Talk of this kind heartened her wonderfully. It gave her something happy and hopeful to think about; in fact, before we went below she

told me that she now preferred the idea of proceeding to Rio to the old scheme of going aboard a ship bound to England.

'I shall be able to purchase a few comforts,' she said; 'whereas I might be transferred to some horrid little vessel that would occupy weeks in crawling along the sea, and in all that time I should be as badly off as I am now.—Do the ladies in South America dress picturesquely, do you know? I should like to be romantically attired on my arrival home. How my dearest mother would stare! What colour a long Spanish veil and a dress of singular fashion would give to my story of our adventures.'

And so she talked.

It was a very calm and lovely night, with the moon, a few days old, going down in the west. The breeze held everything silent aloft; a murmur as of the raining of a fountain floated up from alongside as the white body of the little barque slipped through the darkling waters brimming in a firm black line to the spangled sky of the horizon. The captain had arrived on deck at eight, but he kept to the after-part of the poop, nor once addressed us, often standing motionless for ten minutes at a time, till he looked like some ebony statue at the rail floating softly up and down against the stars to the delicate curtesying of his little ship. I seemed to notice, however, yet without giving much heed to the thing, an indisposition on the part of the watch on deck to coil themselves away for their usual fine-weather naps. From time to time, though dimly, there would steal aft a hum of voices from the black shadow upon the deck past the galley. Once a man kindled a phosphorous match to light his pipe, and a small group of faces showed to the flash of the flame, so to speak, as it soared and sunk to the fellow's sucking at it; but I found nothing in this to arrest my attention saving that I recollect asking Miss Temple to notice the odd effect produced by the coming out of those faces amid the dusk; for one saw *them* only and no other portion of the men's bodies.

We walked to the companion to leave the deck. I scarcely knew whether or not to call a good-night to the captain, so absorbed in thought did his motionless posture express him. But as Miss Temple put her foot upon the steps, he quietly cried out: 'Are ye going to bed?'

'Yes, captain,' I answered; 'and we wish you a very good-night.'

'A minute,' he sung out, and came to us. He seemed to peer into Miss Temple's face, that showed as a mere faint glimmer in the starlight, the moon being then sunk, and addressing me, exclaimed in a voice but a little above a whisper: 'I suppose you have told the lady everything, Mr Dugdale?'

'Yes,' I answered; 'my oath allowed for that, you know.'

'Certainly,' said he.—'It's a grand opportunity for money-getting, mem. The brace of you know more than the wife of my own bosom has any suspicion of. Never once have I opened my lips to Mrs Braine about that there money.'

'I had hoped you would have transferred me to a homeward-bound ship,' said Miss Temple.

'You don't want to be separated from your sweetheart, do you?' he exclaimed.

This was a stroke to utterly silence her. I believe she had spoken from no other motive than to finesse, that the captain might suppose her as sincere in her belief of his story as I was; but this word *sweetheart* was like a blast of lightning. What her face would have exhibited if there had been light enough to see it by, I could only imagine.

'It grows late, captain; good-night,' said I, pitying her for the confusion and disorder which I knew she would be under.

'Have you been thinking over the terms of that letter we were talking about?' said he.

'Yes,' I answered. 'I'll pay your cabin a visit after breakfast and write it out.'

'Very well, sir. That and the agreement about the division of the money too. I shall want to shift my helm for Rio to-morrow.'

He left us, and we descended in silence, nor did Miss Temple speak a word to me as we made our way to our gloomy deep-sunk quarters, excepting to wish me good-night.

I slept well, and rose next morning at seven to get a bath in the head. There were a few sailors cleaning up about the decks, and as I passed them on the road to the cabin, I could not fail to observe that they eyed me with a degree of attention I had never before noticed in them. Their looks were full of curiosity, with something almost of impudence in the bold stare of one or two of them. What, I reflected, can this signify but that the fellow Wilkins overheard everything that passed between the captain and me, and has carried the news into the fore-castle. So much the better, I thought; for should the captain come to guess that the men had his secret, the suspicion must harden him in his insane resolve to carry the barque forthwith to Rio to get rid of his crew.

When Miss Temple came out of her berth there was a momentary touch of bashfulness and even of confusion in her manner; then a laughing expression flashed into her eye. As we repaired to the cabin we exchanged some commonplaces about the weather. The captain joined us at the breakfast table. I thought he looked unusually haggard and pale, appearing as a man might after a long spell of bitter mental conflict. He had been on deck since four o'clock, he told us, and had not closed his eyes during the previous four hours of his watch below.

'I get but little sleep now,' said he with a long trembling sigh.

'Were you ever at Rio, Captain Braine?' asked Miss Temple.

'No, mem.'

'I suppose I shall easily find a ship there to carry me home?' said she.

He stared at her and then at me; and then said, looking at her again, 'Don't you mean to go along with him?' indicating me with a sideways jerk of the head.

Her eyes sought mine for counsel.

'It will be a question for you and me to discuss, captain,' said I. 'With all due deference to Miss Temple, it may be you will come to think that the presence of a lady could but encumber us in such a job as we have in hand.'

'Ay, but she has my secret!' said he swiftly and warmly.

'Your secret is mine, and my interests are hers—you know that!' I exclaimed.

'What are the relations between you?' he asked.

A blush overspread Miss Temple's face and her eyes fell.

'Ask me that question presently, captain,' said I, laughing.

He continued to stare slowly at one or the other of us, but remained silent. Presently he rose.

'I've made out that document concerning shares,' said he; 'perhaps you might now come with me and concoct the letter you want me to sign.'

'Very well,' I answered; 'Miss Temple is to witness your signature, and you will allow her to accompany us?'

For answer he gave her one of his astonishing bows, and the three of us went to his cabin. He opened the drawer that contained the chart of his island, and produced a sheet of paper, very oddly scrawled over.

'I made this up last evening,' said he; 'jest see if it'll do, Mr Dugdale. If so, I'll sign it, and ye can draw me up a copy for my own keeping.'

'Miss Temple will have to witness this too,' said I, 'so I'll read it aloud:

"Barque *Lady Blanche*.

At Sea (*such and such a date*).

I, John Braine, master of the barque *Lady Blanche*, do hereby agree with Dugdale, Esquire, that in consideration of his serving me as chief-officer for a voyage to an island situate in the South Pacific Ocean, latitude 33° 16' S. longitude 120° 3' W., unnamed, but bearing due south-west from Easter Island, distant ; I say that in consideration of your helping me to navigate this ship to that there island, and from there to Port Louis, in the island of Mauritius afterwards, the said John Braine do hereby undertake to give and secure to the said Dugdale, Esquire, by this here instrument as witnessed, one whole and full third of the money now lying buried in the above-said island, whereof the amount, as by calculation allowed, is in Spanish pieces from 180 to 200,000 Pounds. Witness my hand and seal."

It cost me a prodigious effort to keep my face whilst I read, almost tragical as was the significance of this absurd document to Miss Temple and myself, as forming a condition, so to speak, of the extraordinary adventure fate had put us upon. I durst not look at her for fear of bursting into a laugh. The man's strange eyes were fixed upon me.

'Nothing could be better,' said I.—'Now, sir, if you will kindly sign it—and I will ask you, Miss Temple, to witness it.'

He turned to seat himself; the girl's glance met mine; but Heaven knows there was no hint of merriment in her face. She was colourless and agitated, though I could perceive that she had a good grip of her emotions. The captain signed his name with a great scratching noise of his pen, then made way for Miss Temple, whose hand slightly trembled as she attached her signature to the precious document. It was now my turn; in a few minutes I had scribbled out a

form of letter addressed to myself guaranteeing me immunity from all legal perils which might follow upon the captain's piratical deviation from his voyage. This also he signed, and Miss Temple afterwards put her name to it as a witness.

'I'll take copies of these,' said I, 'at noon, after helping you to work out the sights.'

I opened the door and followed Miss Temple out. We got under the short awning on the poop and lounged away the morning there. I observed that Mr Lush frequently directed his eyes at me as he paced the weather deck. To my accost he had satisfied himself with returning a surly 'marning,' and we spoke no more. He seemed unable to view me attentively enough to satisfy himself without growing offensive by staring.

'I hope that fellow,' I whispered to Miss Temple, 'may not thwart my Rio programme. Yet I don't see how he could do so. The barque wants a chief-mate, so the captain contends. It is no falsehood; the need would by all sailors be regarded as an imperative one. Still, I hate that surly fellow without exactly knowing why.'

'Do you notice, Mr Dugdale, how those men yonder are constantly looking this way?'

'Yes. As I have explained to you, Master Eavesdropper Wilkins has reported all he heard; and the Jacks understanding at last that their skipper is a madman, are wondering what on earth is going to happen next. They'll be glad, you'll find, to learn that we're heading for Rio when the course is changed. They'll report the skipper as insane, and end our difficulties out of hand for us.'

'I hope so indeed!' she sighed.

Well, for the rest of the day nothing happened worth relating. I took an observation with the captain, worked it out in his cabin, and made draughts of the two extraordinary documents. When we had calculated our situation, he went on deck, and by a tell-tale compass in his cabin I perceived that he had changed the barque's course. Simultaneously with this, I heard the men bracing the yards more forward, and the heel of the barque slightly sharpened to the increased lateral pressure of the fresh breeze upon her canvas. I hastened on deck when I had done my copying to observe the crew's deportment; but in the manner of the few men who were about I witnessed nothing to lead me to suppose that they made anything of this sudden change of course.

When I told Miss Temple that we were now heading as close as the wind would let us lie for the South American port she instantly grew animated; her eyes brightened, a look of hope and pleasure entered her face, and her voice was full of cheerfulness. The captain, on the other hand, grew gloomier as the day advanced. During his watch on deck from twelve to four he paced the planks without any intermission that I was sensible of, walking nearly always in the same posture, with his hands clasped behind him and his head bowed; and with his long black hair, yellow face, and blue gills he needed nothing but the dress of a monk to look one, rehearsing his part for the cloisters.

Some dinner was taken to him on deck; but I saw Wilkins afterwards carry the dishes forward,

and the food appeared to me untouched. At the supper hour he came to the table, but neither ate nor drank. During the greater part of the sitting he kept turning his eyes first on one and then on the other of us with a dim sort of strained interrogative expression in his stare, as though he was struggling with some degree of suffering to dislodge an imagination or idea out of a remote, secret cell of his brain and bring it forward into the clear light of his understanding. He seemed to find Miss Temple's presence a restraint. Sometimes, after eyeing me he'd start as if about to speak, but instantly check himself with a glance at the girl, whilst his face would darken to some mood of irritation and impatience.

Another gloriously fine night followed sunset that day with a brighter and longer-living moon, and a gushing of breeze that melted through and through one with the delicious coolness that it brushed off the waters and gathered from the dew. The carpenter was in charge of the deck. He was standing at the rail abreast of the wheel, when it occurred to me to accost him, that I might gather from his replies what notions had been put into his head by the captain having changed the course. I had Miss Temple on my arm, for the deck was hardly safe for her without some such support. We went to the binnacle, and I took a peep at the card, then crossed over to the carpenter.

'Good-evening, Mr Lush. A rattling breeze this! Since Rio is our destination, such a draught as this should put us in the way of making it smartly, off her course as the barque is.'

'I suppose you know what we're a-going there for?' he answered in a gruff tone of voice, that left me in doubt as to whether he intended a question or not.

'You are second mate, and of course are in the captain's confidence.—What should I know that you don't?'

'Ah, what?' he exclaimed in a voice like a dog's growl.

Miss Temple slightly pressed my arm, as though she would have me walk away.

'A vessel like this wants a chief-mate,' said I, 'some one who knows what to do with the sun and stars.'

'Oh, then, you're acquainted with the reason why we're going to Rio?' said he in a tone of such impudent sarcasm, that without another word I rounded on my heel and led Miss Temple forward.

'You know,' said she, 'that he knows you have learnt the captain's motives, if it be true, as you suppose, that Wilkins has repeated to the men what he overheard; why, then, do you feign an ignorance that can only excite the creature's suspicions?'

'Suspicious of what?'

'That you are acting a double part: with the captain for the sake of his buried money, and with the crew for the sake of your safety.'

'You put it shrewdly, and I am fairly hit,' said I. 'I wanted to get at the fellow's mind, if he has any; it did not occur to me for the moment that he would know through Wilkins of what had passed in the cabin. That is to say if he *does* know; for after all, Wilkins may not

have overheard everything, and for aught we can tell he may not have repeated a syllable of the little that he managed to collect through that bulkhead. No matter, Miss Temple. A fortnight more, please God, and we shall be able to write the word *finis* to this passage of our adventures.'

'I shall scarcely know myself again,' she exclaimed cheerfully, whilst she extended her disengaged white hand to the sheen in the air flowing from the stars and scar of moon, 'when I put my rings on once more. What an experience! How improbable, and how consistently possible and horribly absolute!'

WITCHCRAFT IN EAST ANGLIA.

In the heart of the East Country lies a large pleasant village, 'seated,' as guidebooks say, 'upon an eminence.' The name of this rural spot is Fressingfield, situated in that part of Suffolk known as 'High Suffolk.' The eminence of Fressingfield is more than physical or merely local. East Suffolks boast that the neighbourhood—'the parishes,' par excellence—affords the finest scenting and the soundest riding country in East Anglia, rivaling—they maintain surpassing—that plough paradise, 'the Essex Roothings.' And even beyond 'simple Suffolk' has the fame of Fressingfield been whispered in 'the long ago.' Was not a great Archbishop—Sanicroft of Canterbury—born and buried there; and the East Country dramatist, poor reckless Robert Greene, made 'merry Fressingfield' the scene of his best play. 'The Honourable History of Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay,' played by her virgin Majesty's servants, and sold at the shop by the little north door of Paul's at the sign of the Gun in 1594, might be well worthy of revival now.

Ancient this eminent parish, an inquiry was lately held before the county coroner. The evidence comes as a revelation of the light and leading of our peasantry. The inquest was at Fressingfield, touching the death of Edith Margaret Hammond, aged eleven weeks, daughter of Ben Hammond, farm-labourer. The coroner, in opening the inquiry, stated that as a surgeon had certified that it was impossible to account for death from his external examination, and as there were said to be some suspicious circumstances, he had authorised a post-mortem to be made before the opening of the Court.

Ben Hammond, the father, deposed that the deceased child had seemed healthy, except having a slight ailment a short time since, for which she was attended by a doctor, and from which she soon recovered. Previous to last Friday, the child and her mother had for several days been at the house of the mother's father, George Corbyn. Mrs Corbyn was stepmother to his (the witness') wife, and she had the reputation of being a witch. Mrs Corbyn died on Saturday, having stated that witness and his wife would not have the child long, after her death. The child seemed very queer on Friday, and early on Saturday morning was taken home in a perambulator by himself (the witness) and his wife. On the way they noticed smoke issuing from the perambulator, and the child died after arrival home.

Then Sarah Hammond, the mother, gave her evidence. She said that when she took the child out of the perambulator, the clothing was hot and dry, and smelt of brimstone. She had no doubt but that the child's death was due to witchcraft and wickedness.

George Corbyn, the grandfather, was also called. He gave it as his opinion that his late wife had the powers of a witch; he, in consequence, used always to try to do what she wanted him! This was all the non-scientific evidence.

The medical witness, Mr Smart, surgeon, stated that he had found marks, around which the skin was hard and brawny, with a few scattered vesicles or blisters; this he thought was caused by some irritant—such as, for instance, a poultice or flannel applied too hot. The post-mortem did not show the cause of death; the stomach was empty, and there was nothing to submit for analysis. He thought it probable that death was due to shock occasioned by the local irritant which had caused the marks referred to. Upon this evidence the jury found that 'deceased came to her death from shock to the system, caused by the external application of some irritant, the nature of which there was not sufficient evidence to show.'

Does not it all—the smoke, the smell of brimstone, the reputation of being a witch, the sense of certainty in the minds of near relatives that the death was caused by witchcraft and wickedness—read like some trial in the middle ages? Only one false note in its consistency—the prosaic modern perambulator. And poor George Corbyn! What proof more conclusive could man give of wifely witchery than that 'in consequence he used always to try to do what she wanted him!' If the poor woman had not timely died, we might soon have looked for a yet more tragic report: that she had undergone the old ordeal, and been ducked in the nearest pond.

How strange this grotesque superstition seems to educated people now; yet it is not so very long ago that at Bury St Edmunds, in the same county, Sir Matthew Hale—a most conscientious and, for his times, enlightened judge—sentenced two widow women, Rose Cullender and Amy Duny, to be burned for bewitching children. His lordship's charge to the jury contained these words: 'That there are such creatures as witches, I make no doubt at all; the Scriptures affirm it; and the wisdom of all nations has provided laws against such persons, which is, to my thinking, an argument of their confidence in such a crime.'

The evidence in this trial of one witness—no less a man than wise Sir Thomas Browne—is also noteworthy; his opinion was then the same as stated in *Religio Medici*: 'For my part I have ever believed, and do now know, that there are witches. They that doubt of these do not only deny them, but spirits, and are, obliquely and upon consequence, a sort not of infidels, but atheists.'

Among our country cottagers, faith in witchcraft not only survives here and there, but is in some parts even widely prevalent.

A Suffolk labourer was taken ill. 'Well, what's the matter, C.?' asked an old friend and visitor. C. was very mysterious; he did not rightly know,

&c.; but being pressed, he said at last, that as he surely should soon be 'laid by the wall,' he might as well tell the whole truth—which evidently was a burden on his conscience. He had fared wonderful bad, he said, and went to see a 'wise woman,' who gave him cowhairs to mix with his drop of beer. She must have been a false woman, and he felt it would be the death on him.

Again, a poor Suffolk mother, whose child was ill, had consulted another 'wise woman.' The witch had told her to fill a saucer with milk and put it out abroad at night; if a weasel drank some of it, she was to give what it left to the child; or failing that, she should drag the child by the hair through a thick prickly hedge!

Again, an old man in Norfolk had the ague. A friend, he narrated, promised that his old uncle, who lived a day's distance off and was a 'wise man,' should cure him. The friend was then starting to drive to his uncle's, and would not get to him before next afternoon. Next afternoon, wonderful to relate, the ague ceased all of a sudden; and the patient had not the slightest doubt it was 'drove out of him' by the 'wise' uncle's witchcraft. Superstition is hard to kill.

WELL WORTH WINNING.

CHAPTER II.—MAUD.

ARTHUR LORING sat down to his breakfast with the resolution that if no message came from his uncle he would proceed straight to Charing Cross and enlist with a sergeant of hussars whom he had noticed near the National Gallery. This act would cut the knot of his anxieties and separate him effectually—under another name—from the harassment of his present situation and every vain thought of Maud Lavelle.

There was a certain desperate comfort in the prospect, from which he was drawing that satisfaction that comes from a mind made up, when the landlady's little girl came in and put a letter on the table. It was a civil invitation from Mr Henry Loring to call at his office between two and five and to dine at Cadogan Square in the evening.

'I will go,' he said, 'and find out what he means. I wish I could see Uncle Ralph first, but it is impossible.—Perhaps, after all,' his thoughts suggested to him later on, 'it might be wiser to pass by his office and go straight on to the sergeant.' My uncle has no love for me, and—and— There was a certain danger ahead, which for the moment he possessed sense enough to appreciate; yet it was the fatal fascination of that very danger that was drawing him on towards his enemy.

The same supercilious clerk took his card, looked from it to Loring with cool surprise, and tossing it to a junior, directed him to take it to 'the secretary.'

Now Arthur Loring thought this proceeding an insult, and it was with no very gracious feeling he presently followed the junior into an adjoining room with the word 'Secretary' on the door.

The secretary looked at him with an expression of cold curiosity when he entered. Loring was not even invited to take a chair, an incivility

which he overlooked in recognising the secretary as the same gentleman whom he had seen in the carriage with Miss Lavelle.

'Well, Mr Loring,' observed the secretary, referring to the card, 'can I do anything for you?'

'Not that I am aware of,' said Arthur. 'I have called to see my uncle, Mr Loring, with whom,' he added, catching at the business formula, 'I have an appointment.'

'Ah, an appointment?' said the secretary doubtfully. 'Mr Loring generally advises me of his appointments, and I was not aware of this one. Are you sure it was for to-day? Perhaps, however, if you will state your business to me'—

'Perhaps, sir,' interrupted Arthur, 'you would have the goodness to send my card to Mr Loring? My business is with him, and I need not trouble you further.'

'Well,' said the secretary coolly, 'if you will wait outside, I shall see. One of the clerks will give you an answer.'

The secretary, smarting from the brief encounter, laid the card on his table for a quarter of an hour before he rang for the clerk to take it in.

The clerk came for Arthur Loring just as he was putting on his hat to go; and he was ushered into the presence of his uncle, whom he saw standing on the hearthrug, waiting for him with a smile most unpleasantly like a grin.

'So you have bid adieu to Priors Loring, Arthur,' he observed, fixing his eyes on the young man's face. 'Have you any plans for the future? I suppose your expensive education is not thrown away?'

'You know the value of an expensive education, uncle,' said Arthur courageously, 'when you want to earn bread by it. It is not worth much.'

'Do you want me to help, or merely to advise you? I presume it was not out of mere courtesy you left your card at my house.'

'I want to earn my living,' said the young man, swallowing a lump in his throat. 'I want no further help than to be put in the way of doing so.'

'Very well,' replied Mr Loring quietly; 'I will do as much as that for you. But the salary you will be worth—for a long while yet—will hardly keep you in the clothes you have been used to.'

'I want no more than I may be worth; and I mean to live upon it, be it ever so little, without disgracing either yourself or your office.'

'You will come to dinner this evening, of course? Very well.—And now let us understand each other, Mr Arthur Loring. I may ask you to my house again; but you will clearly understand that no intimacy shall ever exist between you and me. There is that in the past which does not allow it.'

In this sentiment Arthur fully concurred, but from another point of view. What followed rather took him by surprise.

'When I speak of intimacy, I refer only to myself. With my wife and daughter you may be as intimate as they, and your opportunities, permit. You see I am not unreasonable or unjust. Am I quite understood?'

'I think so, sir.'

'You have met my wife and daughter already, I understand. Perhaps I ought to explain why they went to Priors Loring. It is because I do not intend to allow the house I was born in to be occupied by strangers. I have more reverence for the old roof-tree than your father had, who brought it to this sad pass.'

'Then you have rented the house, sir?'

'I have rented it, pending another arrangement whereby I shall possess it.'

'It is not for sale.'

'What have you to do with it, that you should know whether it is or not?' he demanded sharply.

'Nominally, at least, it is still mine, although that, I admit, amounts to very little.'

'You have been talking to my brother Ralph,' said Mr Loring. 'But if you take my advice yourself, you will avoid your uncle Ralph; his counsel will be of as little value to you as it has been to himself.'

Arthur Loring had all this while been standing, and now he thought the interview had gone far enough, and observed: 'If it is your intention to give me a trial in your office, sir, I should be glad to know when I am to come here again?'

'Mr Longfield, the secretary, will arrange that with you; he has entire control of the office.' He touched a bell, and the secretary came in. 'This young gentleman, Arthur, is my nephew, Mr Arthur Loring. Hornby may leave the office this day week, and you will put Mr Loring in his place, or at such other work as you deem best.'

'Very well,' said the secretary, without deigning to glance at the young man; 'let him be here this day week at half-past nine.'

Arthur Loring went down the stone stairs full of shame and mortification, and half tempted to go back and decline to serve under two such men as his uncle and the secretary. But now that he had gone so far he set his teeth with the resolution to follow it up. That secretary, especially, he felt to be his enemy.

Arthur made the most of his opportunities that evening. The secretary was there; and during dinner Arthur exerted himself to the utmost in his attention to the mother and daughter; and as Mr Loring seemed secretly amused, they gave themselves freely to the enjoyment of their guest's good spirits and constant rattle of small-talk. After he had held open the door for them to withdraw, he returned, and rested his elbows on the edge of the table.

'Won't you take some wine, Arthur?' said his uncle.

'I don't care for any wine; but if you don't mind, uncle, I will join the ladies?'

'All right,' said Mr Loring; 'we shan't be very long after you.'

Arthur Loring proceeded to the drawing-room, where he found Miss Lavelle alone. The girl gave a little start of surprise, and looked pleased.

'Mamma has gone up for a handkerchief,' she said. 'You have left the dining-room very soon, Mr Loring. Will they not think you unsocial?'

'And what will you think me, Miss Lavelle?' he asked. 'I hope, not intrusive?'

'Oh no,' she said.

'Will you tell me now,' he asked, 'what you think of Priors Loring? Shall you like to live there?'

'I have never been in so lovely a place, Mr Loring.'

'When are you going down to live there?'

'Oh, I don't know at all,' she answered, looking frightened, as he thought.

'You will grow attached to Priors Loring. Wait until you know it better, and have seen the woods in their full dress: there isn't another place like it in England. I wish I was there to show it to you, I know it so well!'

He spoke with a little enthusiasm, for a very light touch of the subject made his heart warm; but Miss Lavelle recalled him to sober reality by an innocent suggestion.

'Perhaps you will come down—perhaps Mr Loring'—she never spoke of her mother's husband as her father—'will ask you to come down and stay a while with us. I should be so glad.'

'Thank you, Miss Lavelle. No; my uncle will not ask me down to Priors Loring; and if he did, I could not accept his invitation, even to meet you.'

'Oh, I beg your pardon, indeed, Mr Loring,' she quickly said, pink with distress. 'I did not think of what I was saying.'

'There is nothing to pardon. But I shall never stand in Priors Loring again.'

'Isn't "never" a long time, Mr Loring?' she inquired with a pretty smile, 'and you are not very old as yet.'

'True enough; but even earlier in life, people often have to say "never"—something is always coming to an end, you know—like this pleasant little conversation,' he added, as Mrs Loring returned to the drawing-room, and the other gentlemen came in. Mr Longfield, with a glance of contempt at Loring, walked over and seated himself beside Miss Lavelle on the couch.

Arthur Loring was taken aback for a moment by this proceeding. He was standing by the couch, and the situation became awkward for a minute or two, until, in spite of his self-control, the blood mounted to his face, and he moved away to where Mrs Loring sat. Longfield laughing softly as he retired—either at him or at something else—made his ears tingle, and gave him the first inspiration of a craving for retaliation, which afterwards led to singular results.

The rest of the evening was wretchedly uncomfortable. Mr Henry Loring stood mostly on the hearthrug, a silent observer of the scene. What he thought of it, no one could guess from his inscrutable face. Longfield was whispering to Maud Lavelle; and Arthur Loring doing his painful best to maintain a conversation with the cold and reserved mistress of the house. Perhaps an unexpected, and it may indeed have been unconscious, cordiality in her manner of saying good-night was a tribute to the spirit with which he had carried off a trying hour; perhaps, on the other hand, Mrs Loring was glad it was over.

Arthur, considerably on his mettle now, did not allow himself to be annoyed or abashed by the man's supercilious stare as he approached to take leave of the younger lady.

'Good-night, Miss Lavelle,' he said in his pleasantest manner, 'or—will you let me say Maud, for we are cousins, you know?'

'Oh, certainly,' answered the girl, taken a little by surprise, but reddening and smiling at the same time.

'Thank you, Maud.—Good-night.'

Returning Mr Longfield's courtesy by forgetting to notice him, Arthur took a cheerful leave of his uncle and went away.

There was a minute's silence. Miss Lavelle rose and went to her mother. Then Mr Longfield, recovering from his temporary stupefaction, observed: 'Well, I admire that impudence! I wonder you allowed it, Maud.'

That the girl possessed some spirit her suddenly rising colour made manifest, without the sharp rejoinder which she made to this observation.

'Mr Loring is a gentleman,' she said, 'and my cousin.'

'A gentleman, is he?' replied Longfield. 'I should hardly have thought it.'

'Perhaps you are not a good judge,' the girl quietly retorted; and then she and her mother retired.

Arthur Loring, singular to say, was in excellent spirits as he walked out into Sloane Street from the square—he was satisfied that he had given Mr Longfield a good knock-down, and his gratitude to Maud Lavelle for permitting him knew no bounds.

'She's a glorious girl!' was his fervid thought as he halted a minute, looking back into the square. 'Oh Maud, Maud! does that cad mean you to be his?'

That the 'cad' meant it, there could be no doubt; and indeed it looked as if the matter were already removed beyond the province of speculation. The conviction made Arthur Loring smart; but his step was firm and elastic, and he carried his head defiantly as he walked up the street and turned into King's Road.

From the opposite side of the street he saw light in the window of his uncle's sitting-room, and he immediately crossed the road and obtained admittance.

'Well, Arthur,' inquired Ralph with considerable curiosity, 'how did it come off?'

'Delightfully, uncle,' the young fellow dryly answered, throwing himself in a chair and stretching his rather long legs.—'Do you know, I wished you were there.'

'It's a pity I wasn't. Perhaps, if you gave him a hint, Henry might invite me next time you dine there!' The old fellow seemed to enjoy the fancy.

'I'm afraid that will never happen, uncle,' said Arthur, laughing. 'Indeed, I doubt whether I shall myself be again honoured, only there's no accounting for things. Do you know, I had a palpable brush with that fellow Longfield?'

'You don't say? Tell me all about it.'

Arthur did so, and Uncle Ralph enjoyed it immensely. The bold way in which the young fellow had made up to the girl and called her 'Maud,' quite carried him away.

'And you took her hand, I suppose?'

'Of course I did.'

'Squeezed it, I hope?—Hang me, Arthur,' he broke out, laughing, 'I'm sorry you didn't complete the business with a cousinly kiss! But that's coming, I take it.'

'Gently, uncle; I'm not so sure about all that. Miss Lavelle, as far as I can see, is engaged.'

'No doubt of it, but she isn't married. Would you have scruples about cutting out Mr Longfield?'

Arthur Loring made no answer to this question. He was not conceited enough to suppose that, after a couple of hours' acquaintance, the young lady would be in the least inclined to encourage him as a lover. These reflections were disheartening, for Arthur Loring was head and ears in love with Maud Lavelle already; thus, as he felt, illustrating the proverb that misfortunes never come singly.

He proceeded to relate to his uncle, next, the friendly references made by Mr Henry Loring at the office that afternoon. In his admonition to the young man to beware of following his uncle Ralph's example and advice, Ralph freely admitted that his excellent brother had a good deal on his side—from which, however, Arthur resolutely dissented. In regard to the intimation that he, Mr Henry Loring, meant to 'acquire' Priors Loring, Mr Ralph Loring was more serious.

'He means it, sure enough,' he said gravely; 'and he will do it too—and play ducks and drakes with the old place—out of pure malice—which is the worst of it. First of all, he will gut the woods till you won't recognise the ragged remnant.'

'Uncle,' said Arthur Loring, jumping up with flaming face, 'I thought you said the mortgagees would not foreclose?'

'My dear fellow, I merely said what I thought. The men do not live who will risk a hundred thousand pounds if they can help it. Priors Loring at a forced sale might not realise the money. There is a fair prospect of getting in the interest at present, but it is precarious at its best; and a proposal to transfer the mortgage is too tempting to be resisted.'

'Who offers to take over the mortgage?' he asked in dismay.

'Your uncle Henry—nominally, Miss Lavelle's trustees, whom he has persuaded to the step; but, in fact, your uncle. Priors Loring is to be acquired with that charming young lady's money, for of course they will foreclose and buy the place in, sending you unceremoniously about your business. So that Priors Loring will be virtually your uncle's, nominally Miss Lavelle's, and actually Mr Longfield's, as soon as he marries the girl. That's the little scheme, Arthur.'

Arthur Loring lay back in the chair, pale with speechless pain and indignation. That he should lose his old heritage was hard enough to bear; that it should be wrenched from his powerless hand by the sinister agency of his father's enemy was worse; but worst and most torturing of all was the thought that the fellow Longfield should eventually lord it as master over Priors Loring and Maud Lavelle.

'I'd kill the fellow in the public street before I would suffer him to own Priors Loring or'—

'Maud Lavelle—just so,' said Ralph sententiously. 'But killing men generally ends very unsatisfactorily, and other methods should be tried first. If I were you, now, I should see my course clearly before me—and you have a fairish start, I think.'

'What is it?' he asked blankly.

'Cut the fellow out. If I couldn't get into

the house, I would waylay her—write sonnets—capture her, and run away with her; and the frightened little thing would love you all the better for it.'

It was dangerous advice to fire a young man with, especially a young man in Arthur Loring's circumstances; but then, as Mr Henry Loring had warned his nephew, and as Ralph Loring himself admitted, the adviser was a notoriously bad adviser. Arthur, however, did not think of this, but took it all to heart—rather despondently, when he cooled down on the way back to Marylebone, and reflected on the extreme improbability of such a programme ever becoming feasible. He had come upon the ground too late; had he known Maud Lavelle before she became engaged to Longfield, there might have been a chance. But an engagement, even to a man she doesn't like, inspires a girl with a certain loyalty which makes her strong against the approaches of a new wooer, even without reference to the armour of honour which protects her in this introductory stage of a new condition of life.

On reaching his lodgings, Arthur Loring flung himself dressed on the bed, fretful and depressed. A review of the situation convinced him that it would be better if he had obeyed the impulse to go to the recruiting sergeant; had he done so, he would have been spared all this present as well as prospective mortification. But by taking the course which he had taken, he should have to swallow and digest the mortification, and should be driven to the recruiting sergeant in the end. He saw no other end to it. It was all going like a knife through him.

DOWN A CUMBERLAND LEAD MINE.

THE visitor, approaching from Ambleside on a fine day, is not likely to forget his first view of Derwentwater. There lies the lake some two hundred feet below, with its brother Bassen-thwaite shimmering in the distance. The little town of Keswick nestles in between, and seems to claim a share of gray old Skiddaw's guardianship. And if that same visitor sees the scene again and often, he will learn, perchance, with Keats, that verily

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever:
Its loveliness increases.

Although it can only be a few of the thousands taking back to their toil-dens happy memories of a sojourn in Lakeland who have the time to examine minutely any of the varied lessons which the district has to teach; to those, however, who can, the country ever becomes more interesting. It is not within the province of this article to theorise as to the volcanic thrust which forced the earth's surface up, like a huge blister that, subsiding, fell, and formed the Cumbrian hills and vales. What we know for certain is, that the lower Silurian rock, which lies fathoms deep below the waters of Solway Firth, has been upheaved, until the upturned edge of its fractured bed stands skywards and weather-worn on Skiddaw top. In such earth-throes, hornblende and

mica, quartz and feldspar, fused, and formed the trap and brecciated rocks of Raven's Crag and Borrowdale.

On examining the geological maps of the district—say, taking Derwentwater as the centre, and describing a circle of seven miles' radius around it—the first thing which strikes the observer is a number of narrow gilt lines, varying in length from distances representing a few hundred yards to over two miles, and lying in very diverse directions of the compass. These denote mineral deposits, and in this area signify almost exclusively lead ores. A circle described as above, would include all the principal Cumberland lead mines and veins; from those at Patterdale, which burrow into the sides of Helvellyn on the east, to the Thornthwaite lodes by the shores of Bassenthwaite on the west. The characteristic which has probably made the greatest impression on the passing tourist's mind in connection with these mines is the huge revolving water-wheel which is the necessary adjunct to every shaft. These are used for pumping out the water, and must never stop night or day.

Before going down a mine, it is necessary to put on a well-lined flannel coat and overalls. The miners generally descend by the ladders; but as it is fatiguing, and here and there rounds are broken, it is easier, and perhaps safer, to go on the bucket. This is an iron receptacle, about two feet square and five or six feet deep, having a door at the bottom, through which the ore, when brought to the surface, is emptied. The steel cable by which it is hoisted is fastened to the middle of a strong iron bar fixed across the top. Only two persons can descend at a time, one on each side of the rope. Each places a foot on the bar, at the same time grasping firmly the rope well above his head. The other foot hangs close to, whilst the disengaged hand holds a candle and is kept against the hip. The object of this position is to bring the body into as small a compass as possible by adopting an extreme perpendicular attitude, the shaft never being made larger than is absolutely necessary. The space is ample, but it is not advisable to stick one's elbows out.

At one of the mines the men are very fond of telling about a gentleman who was a large shareholder and had come from London—all strangers connected with mines appear to come from there—to see it. On examining the mode of descending, he persuaded the captain, as a mine manager is called, to allow him to go down in the bucket instead of on it. This was evidently a safe method, although it was not quite apparent how his visitor was to be hauled out when the bottom was reached. However, down they went; but unfortunately the engineman had not been informed of the special arrangement, and consequently stopped the winding drum at the usual place, with the result of immersing the bucket and its occupant up to his waist in the water in the 'sump,' as the hole is called which is made at the bottom of every shaft. It is into this well that the water, draining from the mine, flows,

and which is afterwards pumped out to keep the workings comparatively dry.

Lead ore or galena, as found in the mineral veins of Cumberland, is always mixed more or less intimately with zinc ore or blende, and contains traces of iron and silver. These veins are vertical fissures in the common slate rock of the district, into which, during geologic ages—but certainly *since* that great upheaval previously mentioned—water has percolated, bearing with it minute particles of stone, earth, and metallic grains. In course of time it has been filled with this more or less rich metalliferous sediment, which by its own weight has become agglutinated into a soft rock-like mass, and which, although very heavy, is easily crushed into its original component parts.

These veins vary greatly in width even at the same level, the sides, or 'faces' as the miners term them, generally converging, however, towards the bottom. At Thornthwaite there are four of these fissures, which have been traced running nearly parallel for half a mile, and in no part are they more than sixty yards apart from each other at the surface. In fact, three of them, owing to inclining at slightly different angles, join into one at a depth of two hundred and twenty feet. In this mine, as in most others, the richest ore is found towards the bottom, and it is a recognised fact in the Cumberland lodes that the nearer perpendicular a fissure is, the richer its contents. All these practical experiences tend to prove the theory of mineral infiltration from the surrounding rocks.

The ore is generally obtained by sinking a vertical shaft, and then excavating at various depths along the lode. These burrows are called levels. But it may be interesting to learn something about how it is known where to sink the shaft. The first thing done, after ascertaining that particles of metal are present by examining, microscopically or otherwise, the surface soil and detritus, is to seek for a fissure. The old way of doing this was by damming up some mountain stream until a large quantity of water was collected, and then causing it to rush in a torrent down the hill-side. This flood, by washing away the surface soil, laid bare the underlying rock, and exposed any vein which might trend across its path. Nowadays, this somewhat extravagant method is dispensed with, as by the accurate surveying now attainable, the direction of all the principal lodes is pretty well known. Presuming that a vein is known to exist whose outcrop is observed a thousand feet up a mountain side, as at the Theelkeld Mine, for instance, it is reached by an adit being driven horizontally close to the foot of the hill. It is always found to be most economical to have the shaft of a mine at as low a level as possible, for the following reasons amongst others: greater economy of carting to and from the mine, more regular supply of water for turning the water-wheel, nearer miners' homes, ore richer the deeper it is mined. Many of these are at once apparent if the reader pictures to himself a mine, say, at or near the summit of Skiddaw or Helvellyn.

After the ore has been extracted, the roof is supported by wooden props, which has to be very thoroughly done in lead-mining owing to the nature of the ore. On reaching the level which

it is intended to traverse, the bucket stops, and the visitor stepping off, proceeds between the iron rails along which the trucks containing ore are pushed. If one of these is heard approaching, it is necessary to step aside into one of the niches which are formed for the purpose at intervals of thirty or forty yards. To get into a working-place, it is generally necessary to climb up a sort of chimney, hanging down which a chain is noticed. It is under such circumstances that the necessity of the flannel coat is found. 'Keep a hand on the chain and use your back and toes,' is the advice of the captain, with frequent warnings, such as, 'Mind your head,' 'Mind that hole,' 'Don't step on that lump—it's loose.'

After a scramble up of some twenty or thirty feet, during which the novice generally manages to put his candle out, he emerges into a sort of chamber. The forms of two men gradually define themselves in the semi-darkness, and the visitor finds himself face to face with the lead-miner at work. The ore is torn from its resting-place by dynamite; the fallen mass is broken up, and sent down to the level through a wooden shoot. At the bottom of this there is a door or panel which prevents it from falling on to the tramway, thereby obstructing the trucks. By opening the panel, the ore falls into the truck, is wheeled away, and sent up by the bucket to the surface. In this form it is known on the bank as the 'crop,' and consists of both galena and blende. It is sorted by means of its colour, the former having a deep indigo-blue tint, whilst the zinc is of a brownish hue, caused by iron impurities. The ore is then crushed and treated by means of various complicated machines and water until the galena is separated from the blende, all the stone and earthy matter being washed away. To attempt a description of this apparatus would be tedious; but an experienced miner can show the whole process by hand in a few minutes. He will take on to a shovel as much of the crushed ore as will cover it an inch deep, he then lowers it into a cistern or trough of water, and by a few waves from side to side the earth and grit are gradually washed off, until nothing remains on the spade but a brownish powder; this is sulphide of zinc. He then continues, but more carefully, and by keeping up a quick vibratory movement of the wrists the zinc slowly disappears over the edge, leaving a residue of blue metallic grains known as sulphide of lead, which, owing to its greater specific gravity, has remained, whilst the various lighter substances have been floated off. This is quite a pretty experiment when done by skilled hands, and explains the theory of the working of the machines, whose ultimate purpose is only to do exactly what he has done, but in as cheap and effectual a manner as the ingenuity of man can invent.

But it may be said 'a blue metallic powder appears to be the result of all this; surely, this is not what is known as lead, nor what is seen in lead water-pipes,' &c. No; this powder is the nearest thing with which nature will supply us, and is the sulphide of the metal. The chemist's science is now requisitioned, and by a process called smelting, the sulphur and all other foreign elements—silver, for instance—are eliminated by roasting in a furnace until the pure metal flows out in a molten stream. Nearly all the Cumber-

land ore is sent into North Wales to undergo this operation; and let it be hoped that such vegetation-destroying fumes as issue from Bagillt's furnaces may never destroy the picturesque vales of Lakeland.

THE CLANG OF THE WOODEN SHOON.

A LANCASHIRE STORY.

IN TWO CHAPTERS.—CHAP. I.

'WHERE'S Miriam bound to again? Yon's noan the highest way whoam.'

'That's noan of ty business,' was the curt answer. 'Miriam can find her way without ty help.'

'Oh, very well. Maybe we'll noan be so proud to ask for her afore long, Lisbeth Holt.'

Lisbeth Holt declined to pursue the discussion. She pinned her shepherd's plaid shawl tighter under her chin—it served as bonnet likewise. A narrow border of fluff-covered hair was visible under it, round her plain pock-marked face, as she stepped out of the gas-lit arch into the misty cobble-paved street, that was echoing from one end to the other with the tramp of wooden clogs.

Most of the clogs were wending their way home from 'Ashworth's'—'Thomas Ashworth & Son' to the public; plain 'Ashworth's' to the whole of that particular district, who regulated their households entirely by the sound of the clanging bell over the entrance.

Did not the small shops round about light up at the first note? ready for the customers who would shortly stream in for muffins and clapp-bread, or dusts of tea and rashers of bacon for the evening meal—half tea, half supper, that was an important banquet after the cold mid-day lunch. The hungry children who had played about the streets since school let out, or drummed at the locked house-doors, hailed it with joyful shouts; all the alleys and byways woke up to life and bustle at the sound. Other places might believe in railway or Greenwich time as they chose; Millgate was sufficient unto itself—it went by the bell at Ashworth's.

The original Thomas Ashworth had been laid away twenty years before in the parish churchyard, where a tablet testified to his numerous virtues, chiefly in the money-making line. His son, the present Thomas Ashworth, was a worthy successor to the old hard-headed Lancashire working-man. Not a bale of raw cotton came inside those ponderous gates, not a roll of calico went away to the bleach-works, without the master's knowledge. Not a hand in the grim many-windowed block but had some personal legend of the master's far-seeing eye, and its inconvenient acuteness in detecting defalcations, however cunningly hidden away.

His son, again, number three, the typical third, who was in turn to have the spending of the gold, was—alas for the hopes of the family—sauntering leisurely along Whitworth Siding, this misty March evening, with pretty Miriam Holt, one of his own mill hands.

The Lancashire operative is not demonstrative. Miriam had grown up to woman's estate troubled with few compliments. She was a 'gradely lass,' but her gradeliness, or comeliness, was

hardly of the order that appealed to her compatriots, who preferred vivid red and white and plenty of it. Miriam's dark hair, banded like velvet round her shapely head, big gray eyes, and ivory-white skin, were too quiet and colourless to cause much stir in her own particular set.

It had a different effect on young Oswald Ashworth. Standing idly by the checker's desk, the first day of his return to his father's roof with all the finish that education and travel could give, he caught a passing glimpse of Miriam's eyes, shining with admiration and astonishment at the unexpected vision of the 'young master,' and politely lifted his hat in recognition of it.

'Who is that girl?' he asked, as Miriam vanished into the darkness of the street. 'Surely a new hand.'

'No; she's old Joshua Holt's daughter. There's the two of them. They've never worked any other place but here.'

'Is old Joshua living still?'

'Ay, that he be; and at his frame as busy as any of them.'

'Curious how he should have a daughter with such a face. She might have stepped out of an old picture,' remarked Mr Oswald, loitering back to his father's private sanctum.

Curious, also, that Mr Oswald should pause beside her loom the next day to ask after old Joshua, and refresh his memory concerning certain details which Stott, the checker, could have given quite as efficiently. The corner where Miriam worked was on the ground-floor; and somehow, after that first day or two, it began to lie very much in Mr Oswald's path as he went in and out of the office, where he was supposed to be taking up the business with a view to one day filling his father's shoes.

Miriam was quite aware of it. The innocent damsel who, until her lover is on his knees before her, has not one idea whither matters are tending, belongs to a bygone age, and must have been somewhat deficient in understanding even then. Above all the din of machinery, Miriam could catch the sound of Mr Oswald's foot as he came down the narrow passages. Through all the fluff and flying shuttles, she could see every outline of the gray ulster, feel every glance of the brown eyes that told her the old story so unmistakably.

The bare Millgate streets grew strangely beautiful. What matter if the ground under foot were mud and puddle, was not the sky dotted with stars overhead? Down that black cindery path known as Whitworth Siding, Mr Oswald had first paused beside and sheltered her under his own dripping umbrella. It was a veritable pathway into Eden after that. Its charms were fenced in on either side by blank walls of stone slabs somewhat after the fashion of tombstones. Miriam sometimes put out her hand and stroked them softly, in token of gratitude for the bliss that had come upon her in their presence.

'They'll be wondering what's come over you to-night,' she said, referring to some festive gathering he had mentioned, as they lingered over the last few cindery steps. Their road had to separate at the end of the lane; Whitworth Siding *could* be made to lie on the way both to Fairfield, Mr Oswald's abode, and to Millgate proper; but it was not the most direct road to either place.

'Let them wonder,' returned the young man impetuously. 'Isn't it far better out here together, than shut up in that stifling concert, listening to third-rate artists with never a decent face among them?'

'I thought Miss Franks was to be there,' said Miriam.

'Oh, she is well enough for my mother; but I want some one for myself. It's not late yet; come back for one more turn. I've been seriously thinking it out this last day or two, Miriam; we must put an end to this sort of thing some time, and the sooner the better. When will you marry me?'

Miriam looked up at him with a rush of hot colour over her face, a rush of hot tears in her eyes. It's not easy to say what theory the girl cherished about this acquaintance that had swept into her existence, and carried away all other considerations before it, or if she had any theory at all.

'Marry you!—marry you!' she stammered brokenly. 'Mr Oswald, you're a gentleman; and I'm—I'm nought but a—'

'You are the girl I love, and the girl I mean to marry,' interrupted Oswald. 'Do you think I'm not the best judge, Miriam? We cannot go on like this always; people will talk, even in a hole like this; and once my wife, you would be out of it all.'

'His wife.' She could then see him every day, not in flying minutes snatched from work or home; one round of Paradise for brief glimpses through the bars. What had life held before for her in comparison? 'His wife. Was he the best judge for himself?' she wondered. There was his father, the great Thomas Ashworth; his mother, who drove up to the mill sometimes in a ponderous brown chariot that was the embodiment of all splendour in Miriam's eyes—the people he spoke of so lightly, though they were awful realities to her.

'Your own folk, your feyther and mother, how will they like it?' she said breathlessly.

The young man's face clouded over. 'They must learn to like it, Miriam. I am their only son; it would be hard lines if I could not do as I thought right in a matter that concerns myself so nearly.'

'Well, if thy folk dunnot mind, mine needn't,' said Miriam, quitting that point. She saw it disturbed him. In truth, they rarely talked of anything or any one beyond themselves. With his eloquent love-words at her ear, with her perfect face faintly shadowed out in the dim starlight, what were fathers, mothers, friends, or position, compared with love's young dream?

The only flaw—such a trivial one Oswald blushed when he found himself dwelling upon it—was Miriam's speech. The broad Lancashire dialect, the 'thee' and 'thou' she used so naturally. Dress was easily altered; he would drape her in silks, put rings on her fingers, French shoes on her feet in place of those lumbering clogs that tripped so blithely beside him. But her education would be a longer story. No matter. He had found a precious stone in an unlikely place; should he complain about the setting? Oswald was just at the headstrong enthusiastic stage when difficulties are welcome for the pride of overcoming them. All he said or did

was perfect in Miriam's eyes. When they finally parted at the end of Whitworth Siding, it was agreed between them that the marriage should be as soon as Oswald could make the needful arrangements. No one but Lisbeth was to know beforehand. What is the benefit of being a rich man's son, if it do not confer some amount of liberty? That the rich man has also some corresponding claim, is the reverse side of the question, with which they were not at present interested.

And then they parted. Mr Oswald strode down a road to the right that, after various doubles and turns, brought him to his father's gate. A square-built, well-to-do looking house, with a drive up to the pillared front-door, and a square conservatory jutting out on one side. A staid man-servant opened the door. He was a comparatively new institution, acquired with a view to Oswald settling down at home again, and possible entertainments in consequence. Oswald crossed the hall, and looked in at the drawing-room door. Two ladies were sitting by the hearth. One—his mother—looked round with an exclamation of relief. 'Oswald, I thought you were never coming. What has kept you to-night, when you knew we were waiting for you? Do go and get dressed, and something to eat; dinner is over long ago.'

'So I suppose I am expected to say I don't want any,' remarked Oswald lightly, walking up to the rug and shaking hands with the young lady in the easy-chair.—'Do you think that's fair treatment for a hungry man after a long day over cotton bales, Miss Laura?'

'It's not so hard as it sounds,' she laughed. 'I heard your mother giving orders about sundry dishes that were to be kept hot for you.'

'Then I had better go see what they are,' said Oswald.—'Don't be uneasy, mother; I'll be ready in less than half an hour, and that will give us lots of time. The company would not half see that new dress of Miss Laura's if we got there punctually. There's no glory to be extracted out of a local concert unless one is late.'

The carriage that took them to the town hall had to drive through some of the lower streets. Before a small millinery shop, two mill-girls, with shawls pinned over their heads, were earnestly inspecting the latest Paris styles as interpreted by Millgate talent. Miss Franks leant forward to look at them in some amusement.

'What a very uncommon face one of those girls has,' she said suddenly. 'Any painter might be glad to have her for a model.'

Mr Oswald flushed angrily in the dusk. A painter's model! The face that had been so near his own not an hour ago. He would speak to Miriam, though; she must not stand about those wretched shop windows after dark, he decided, oblivious of the fact that all Miriam's shopping, housekeeping, and everything else connected with private life had to take place after dark, or not at all.

'Don't you think so?' asked Miss Laura, rather surprised at his silence.

'Is Millgate exactly the kind of place one would select for models, as you think?' he said stiffly.

'I said nothing about Millgate,' retorted Miss Franks. 'I am sure Mrs Ashworth would have

agreed with me, and you are not generally so short-sighted.'

'Was it one of our mill-girls?' said that lady languidly, by way of response to the call upon her intelligence. Mrs Ashworth's people had been county squires, and she was considered to have sacrificed something when she consented to enter the firm of T. Ashworth & Son.

'Now, mother, how many of the mill-girls am I expected to know?' protested Oswald. 'I'm not the gate-keeper.'

'I believe your father knows every face in the factory,' said his mother as the carriage drew up at the lighted entrance; 'but you had never his turn for business, Oswald.'

'Thou'st late agen, lass,' said old Joshua Holt as Miriam slipped in at the half-open door and flung her shawl over a chair in the corner. 'Where hast thee been to till this time of neet?'

'I wanted a bit of ribbon for mysel.—Dunnot put more tea in, Lisbeth; I'm noan that clemmed [hungry].'

Lisbeth set back the brown teapot on the deal table; old Joshua turned his back on the room and smoked stolidly up the chimney. Miriam cut a wedge from the loaf, spread some butter on it out of a striped basin, and began her repast minus tablecloth, napkin, plate, or any other superfluities of that nature.

The room was not a bad one of its kind. A noble fire blazed in the dusty grate. Lisbeth had not begun her evening cleaning-up yet. A mahogany chest of drawers stood opposite the door, each foot mounted on a little block of wood. This gave height and dignity to the chest, and lifted it beyond the reach of broom or scrubbing-stone. On the top stood a family Bible, shrouded under a crochet doily, and on the Bible a swing looking-glass. Three or four wooden chairs—one a rocker—and the deal table comprised the rest of the furniture. The stone floor was bordered all round with a design in dappled whiting; the middle was sprinkled with coarse sand, that gritted cheerfully under the iron-bound clogs of the owners.

There was but the one room. All the family washing, cleaning, cooking, went on there. The shops of the neighbourhood might not be of the highest order, yet possibly Mr Oswald himself, had he occupied so small a room, might have been glad to go out and inspect them occasionally by way of change, after an evening indoors.

It was the end of March when Oswald made that formal tender of his hand and heart in Whitworth Siding. It was June—only son though he was—before he was able to carry out his plans.

Something went amiss at a New York house they did business with, and Thomas Ashworth decided to send his son out to inquire into the matter. It may have been necessary, or it may have been that the old man's keen eyes saw something not quite satisfactory in Oswald's proceedings, and trusted to the change to divert his thoughts. Be that as it may, it failed completely in that respect. Oswald came back the last week in May, and gave Miriam peremptory orders to hold herself in readiness to marry him on the coming Whit-Monday.

In Lancashire, Whitsuntide is an important epoch. Are new gowns and coats to be forthcoming through the summer, what satisfaction could possibly be taken in them if they were not to hand for Whitsunday? Was there a child whose mother failed to resurrect a white, or, at anyrate, light-coloured frock to wear in the Sunday-school procession? that child was an outcast from respectability till the next year's Whitsuntide once more opened the door of hope.

Miriam was getting her gown in order too—a very quiet one. She liked bright blues and purples, warm crimson and orange. This was only a dark blue, almost black, but it was Mr Oswald's choice; and though Lisbeth and the dressmaker together protested in favour of something more summer-like, and Miriam in her heart agreed with them, she never dreamed of going counter to his wishes.

There was no bell at Ashworth's this bright Whit-Monday morning. The busy wheels stood still. Joshua and an ancient friend had taken themselves and their pipes to the canal bridge, which commanded an extensive view of various Sunday-school gatherings. Sunday-schools are for the grown up as well as the young in that region, for the married and middle-aged as well as children; and if Joshua was no longer a scholar, it was more from lack of zeal than from any disqualification on the score of age.

In the family sitting-room, with carefully-locked door, Lisbeth was helping Miriam into her blue gown with tears stealing down her plain seamed face.

'It's noan the wedding I thought you'd ha' had, Miriam, slipping out as if we were ashamed of oursels. Even the Chadwicks had a trip to Manchester the day they wor wed.'

'We'll mak up for it after. The quieter the better. Oh Lisbeth, if old Thomas should get to hear of it! I'm feared of my very life to think of him.'

'He'll ha' to hear of it when he's thy feyther-in-law,' was the consoling reply. 'Now, Miriam, there's no one agate in the street, we'll best get away.'

In the dingy church—it was at the other end of the town, and one Miriam had never been inside before—were gathered a whole crowd of other aspirants for matrimony. Among them, Oswald and his soberly-dressed bride attracted little attention. In ten minutes it was all over, and the three stood in the porch hardly able to realise that the deed was done.

'You have been a useful friend, Lisbeth,' said her new brother-in-law, putting a tiny jeweller's case in her hand for parting gift. 'Tell your father about it, and say as little as possible to any one else till we come back from London.'

Lisbeth opened the case when she got back to the solitary house—an exquisitely-carved cameo brooch. She turned it over in some disgust. 'I could ha' picked out a better-looking thing than that at old Mother Deans's for a shilling. Not a bit of shine about it; and that was the best he could do, with all his money!'

By which it will be seen that Lisbeth's artistic education was yet in its infancy.

A little distance out of Millgate proper, on the Lancaster Road, stands a row of semi-detached

villas, with elaborate iron palisades. An air of dignified repose pervades the neighbourhood; no clogs tramp down the side-walk, no lorry-loads of cotton lumber along the roadway. The inhabitants know and understand nothing whatever about that clanging bell at Ashworth's—with one exception, and that is the middle villa, where Mrs Oswald Ashworth found herself established a few weeks after that fateful Whit-Monday.

They came home late one evening. There was no one to welcome them but the sedate middle-aged servants Mrs Ashworth had engaged at her son's request. She made one cursory inspection of the household, and saw that the essentials were in place; but the disappointed mother could not bring herself to face the first homecoming of the 'scheming mill-girl' who had robbed her of her son.

'Never mind, Miriam; it's only a case of a few weeks at the latest, before she quite gets over it,' said Oswald cheerfully as he set out the next morning. Probably not until he had grown-up sons of his own would he fully understand the hopes that had been vested in his future. 'Now I'm going to interview my father, and see how the land lies generally; and you'll have plenty of time to get things ship-shape before dinner. Six sharp, mind. I'll not need to go round by Whitworth Siding to-night.' And then the gate clashed behind him, and Miriam was left to herself.

She, whose whole day, except for some undesirable intervals when the hands had been 'half-timers'—which meant also half-wages—had hitherto been mapped out for her among the roar of machinery, suddenly stranded in the silence of this strange smart house, with strange servants, who looked at her curiously and half enviously—a person no better than themselves, who was yet the young master's wife. She sat down in the drawing-room, her hands idly folded, and wondered what she was to do with herself all day. It was no use going to see Lisbeth; she would be at the mill till six; besides, she had a sort of shyness about exhibiting herself in her old haunts under her changed conditions. There were 'standard authors' in the dwarf bookcase beside her; but Miriam was not a ready reader, and had had too little practice to find any pleasure in them. Needle-work—she had cobbled up the family stockings on Saturday nights, but that was the extent of her acquirements in that department. Resources in herself she had none.

A knock at the door and enter one of the prim servants. 'Would you please to say what is to be for the dinner, ma'am?'

Miriam gave a gasp of dismay. 'I—I don't quite know, Jane; I forgot to ask Mr Ashworth about it.'

Jane looked at the tablecloth in wooden silence—it was not her place to suggest anything.

'We must have some meat,' began her mistress desperately, 'and—and potatoes, and perhaps a pudding or something.'

'Very well, ma'am. Shall I order the things, or will you?'

'Oh, you. Or, stop a minute. I think we'll have tea for to-night, and some chops to it, and leave the dinner till to-morrow.'

Jane retired; and her mistress sat still with a hot face, wondering if this were to be the

programme every morning henceforth. Millgate tea and a rasher was a much simpler matter.

That was but the beginning of troubles. Miriam inspected the house as far as she could without encountering the domestics, and was standing at the window looking down the quiet road when she saw Mrs Ashworth's brown chariot draw up at the gate and two ladies get out. Miriam went down with a beating heart and trembling knees, too utterly confused to make any attempt at welcoming her visitors. Mrs Ashworth rose up stiffly from her seat and extended a chilly hand.

'I called to see if you found the house quite satisfactory, Mrs Oswald? Of course, we had no idea of what your personal tastes were likely to be.'

'It was very good of you to take so much trouble,' Miriam stammered out. 'It'll do fine. I'm feared to touch things, they're that grand.'

'It is a convenient distance from the town,' remarked the younger lady—'about a quarter of an hour, if you walk quickly, I should think.'

'Oh, I dunnot mind for that—I'm a rare good walker,' burst forth Miriam, eager to lay claim to anything she could do.

A little silence fell upon the room. Mrs Ashworth broke it: 'This is my half-niece, Miss Franks; she was good enough to help in the selection of your furniture.'

Miriam nodded. 'Yes; I knew it was her the minute I set eyes on her. Oswald has talked about you often.'

'Very kind of him,' returned Miss Franks coldly. 'You must have been much interested.'

'I hope you will find the servants equal to their duties,' was Mrs Ashworth's next remark. 'My son is rather particular about details.'

Was he? Miriam's thoughts travelled back to one or two incidents during their London sojourn, then onward to the tea and chops provided for to-night, uneasily.

They went away soon after; and Miriam shut herself up in her own room till Oswald's step at the door brought her down to greet him.

'Had my mother and Laura Franks, have you? That's right. I am very glad they came so soon, Miriam. By the way, I hope you gave them some tea?'

'Tea!' echoed Miriam. 'It was only four o'clock.'

Oswald laughed; but he looked a little annoyed. He put his head into the dining-room: 'There's tea in abundance now, at anyrate. Where is the dinner, Miriam? I've had none.'

'I told Jane we'd mak out with chops to-day,' said Miriam. 'I didn't just know what to order for a regular dinner.'

Only the setting, Oswald—only the setting, and that makes no real difference in the value of the stone.

Yet that same setting was destined to become a serious irritation. Scarcely a week later Oswald was detained late at the mill, and sent a message home to that effect. It was near ten when he turned in at his own gate; the sitting-room windows were in darkness, the hall lamp unlighted. He hung up his hat in some perplexity; the kitchen door stood ajar, and a babel of voices issued forth. Oswald looked in: Jane was no-

where visible; but his father-in-law was. Old Joshua sat, his feet on the fender, a jug of beer at his elbow, and a long clay pipe in his mouth, puffing out volumes of smoke. Miriam and Lisbeth sat beside him, their feet likewise on the fender, all three loudly talking in broad native dialect, that broke off abruptly at the entrance of the master of the house.

'How do you do, Joshua and Lisbeth? I did not know you were here.'

Mr Oswald shook hands a little constrainedly, and looked at his wife.

'Father's taking his pipe in the kitchen,' she explained. 'I know you don't like the smell of it in the dining-room.'

That strong twist—certainly not. Oswald coughed. 'Where is Jane?' he said, looking round. It only needed her presence to complete the circle.

'Oh, I told her she could go play hersel for an hour or two, as you were not at home.'

Oswald was tired; he was also hungry, a condition not favourable to a fine sense of justice. 'It doesn't exactly look as if I had been expected either,' he said with some stiffness.

Old Joshua had risen from his chair, and was brushing the ashes out of his pipe. 'Come, Lisbeth; it's toime we were going, lass. Thou'st had crack enough for one neeb.'

'Do not let me disturb you,' said Oswald politely; 'I am going up for a wash directly.'

But Lisbeth was already putting on her shawl. She wore a hat to-night, in honour of the visit—a black velvet structure, with a bunch of red roses that set Oswald's teeth on edge to look at. They bowed themselves out by the back kitchen door, which Oswald afterward set wide open, to let out the fumes of Joshua's pipe.

He made no remark to Miriam about the incident, but somehow that was Joshua's last visit to his daughter's house. The old man had some of the sturdy Lancashire independence that declined to go anywhere on sufferance.

'If thy sister wants to see us, she can come here, Lisbeth,' he announced the next morning after he had slept upon the matter; 'but I'm blowed if I go to her foine house agen. There's no room for the loike of us there.'

EVENING.

LANDWARD, in haste, the screaming sea-fowl fly
Across the waters, for the day is done;
And, lonely, in the west, the sinking sun
With golden fingers grasps the darkening sky.
Sullen, on rocky shore the wild sea breaks,
Its white foam gleaming through the gathering night
With fitful motion in the waning light,
And in dim caves an answering echo wakes.
Then, one by one, the golden fingers loose
Their golden hold upon the darkening west;
And half the earth is filled with quiet rest,
Which shadows deep and slumbers soft induce,
Save where, beneath the star-beams, silver-bright,
The sleepless ocean murmurs through the night.

J. J. HALDANE BURGESS.

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